

## NMSP Response to NAPA Report Recommendations

The NAPA Report provided recommendations to the NMSP in six thematic areas: NMSP Strategic Plan, Sanctuary Management Plans, System-Wide Monitoring and Condition Reports, Annual Operating Plans, Planning and Guidance Documents, and NMSP's Future. While many of the recommendations are validation of work already ongoing in the NMSP, a number of new activities are considered, that will be implemented as resources allow. The response of the NMSP to each recommendation is summarized below.

### **THE NMSP STRATEGIC PLAN**

NAPA Recommendation: Develop a new performance matrix for educational activities to address outcomes.

NMSP Response:

- The NMSP's current education performance measure is designed to measure a product (or output) of the program rather than a goal-oriented outcome. However, it is an interim measure used while the program develops an education outcome-based performance measure. A new outcome-based performance measure will be put in place in the near future.
- The NMSP developed a tracking plan for the current education performance measure in the summer of 2006. A tracking plan is a detailed protocol that describes the information gathering process necessary for reporting meaningful progress on program performance measures.

NAPA Recommendation: Do not revise current 2005-2015 Strategic Plan.

NMSP Response:

- The NMSP does not plan to revise the current Strategic Plan at this time, as it is derived explicitly from the National Marine Sanctuaries Act. Instead, the program is going to focus efforts on implementing the Strategic Plan.

### **SANCTUARY MANAGEMENT PLANS**

NAPA Recommendation: Continue to involve advisory councils and working group in revising management plans.

NMSP Response:

- The NMSP plans to continue its current practice, which is in line with the recommendation.

NAPA Recommendation: Develop a performance measure addressing whether public involvement in management plan review (MPR) results in improved marine literacy.

NMSP Response:

- The NMSP will revisit its suite of program performance measures in January 2007. This recommendation will be addressed during this review.

NAPA Recommendation: Do not make a practice of excluding regulatory matters from MPR.

NMSP Response:

- A deliberate decision whether or not to include some or all regulatory changes in a MPR should be made on a case-by-case basis. Factors in making this determination include the complexity of the proposed regulation(s) and the availability of resources to complete the process.

NAPA Recommendation: Draft management plans should be returned to sites within one year of submission to HQ (in response to a finding that MPRs were taking too long).

NMSP Response:

- All levels of the NMSP have equal responsibility in ensuring the progress of MPRs; however, it has been difficult in the past for sites to manage the competing need for MPR efforts while continuing to operate at full capacity. At the HQ level, a number of factors, some beyond the control of the NMSP, may complicate and slow down the clearance process. The NMSP will work to realign priorities at all levels and provide more structure to the review process in order to shorten the time to complete MPR for each site.
  - For example, the program is finishing an action plan to improve the MPR process through better integration and coordination.
  - The action plan calls for revitalizing the national MPR team, comprised of staff from HQ and sites, including periodic conference calls, and conducting comprehensive MPR pre-planning prior to initiating review at a site to help achieve a timely and effective outcome.

## **SYSTEM-WIDE MONITORING AND CONDITION REPORTS**

NAPA Recommendation: Prepare condition reports for all sites within two years.

NMSP Response:

- The NMSP is committed to finishing all condition reports within the next two years.
- The NMSP has recognized the importance of completing the condition reports particularly as they provide the baseline status of sanctuary resources needed to evaluate the program's outcome-based performance measures (i.e., to improve or maintain living marine resources, habitats, and water quality).

NAPA Recommendation: Condition reports should be available at sites at the start of MPR.

NMSP Response:

- The NMSP agrees and will adhere to this recommendation.

NAPA Recommendation: Conditions reports should be available for baseline data for the next PART.

NMSP Response:

- The next PART process will likely occur in FY09. The NMSP plans to have all condition reports finalized by this time.

NAPA Recommendation: Sanctuary Superintendents should be responsible for signing off on the condition reports.

NMSP Response:

- It is the practice of the NMSP to give final approval to the Sanctuary Superintendent for his or her site's condition report.

## **ANNUAL OPERATING PLANS**

NAPA Recommendation: Minimize new initiatives not directly focused on current performance measures.

NMSP Response:

- The NMSP plans to focus on management activities that further the program performance measures. To this end, the program developed detailed tracking plans for each of the measures in FY06, and plans to publish the first annual Progress Report in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of FY07. This progress report will be used for guidance in the NMSP's FY08 budget planning, with priorities being placed on activities that will help achieve the program performance measures.
- However, the NMSP sometimes encounters opportunities that were not apparent at the beginning of a fiscal year budget planning process. While the program strives to prioritize progress on the current performance measures, it reserves the flexibility to respond to these opportunities as they arise.
- Not all the goals and objectives of the program are represented in the suite of program performance measures, which are designed to be representative rather than comprehensive of the program activities.

## **NMSP PLANNING AND GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS**

NAPA Recommendation: The program should focus on managing for performance rather than on more planning.

NMSP Response:

- The NMSP will continue to focus resources, as appropriate, on activities that directly support quantifiable progress toward program performance measures. Additional planning is also required to ensure efficient execution reporting of these activities.

- The NMSP will incorporate performance evaluation in the budget planning process, as described above.

NAPA Recommendation: Reduce the number of planning activities.

NMSP Response:

- The NMSP will fulfill commitments to finish existing planning documents necessary for a full suite of management documents (e.g., 10-year requirement documents). The program will not readily initiate new planning documents that have not been previously discussed.

NAPA Recommendation: Plans for crosscutting programs like education, science, and historical resources should focus on NMSP’s comparative advantage within each field, and on how NMSP can use that advantage to entice others to help the program improve its scores on the 19 performance measures.

NMSP Response:

- The NMSP believes that its “comparative advantage” lies primarily in four areas: the unique mandate to comprehensively protect and manage sanctuary resources in an ecosystem context; the place-based focus of the NMSP on nationally significant areas of the nation’s ocean and Great Lakes; the NMSP commitment to include partners, constituents and the public in sanctuary decision-making processes; and the dedicated and knowledgeable staff of the program. These factors, combined with the appeal of sanctuaries make the NMSP attractive for developing partnerships with other entities. Forming partnerships and leveraging resources have always been a priority for the NMSP; in fact the program has currently over 400 partnerships with other entities. The NMSP will continue to pursue such opportunities, for all cross-cut programs and across the entire system.

## **NMSP’S FUTURE**

NAPA Recommendation: NMSs should be used to test approaches to regional marine ecosystem governance that focus on a civic approach.

NMSP Response:

- The NMSP remains committed to a 35-year history of public involvement in marine ecosystem management. The NMSP is equally committed to continuing to explore, refine, and enhance its civic approach to management. A civic approach to ocean governance is participatory, multipurpose, and locally based decision-making with clear national goals. To this end, the NMSP will consider convening a working group on this subject, initiating a research project with academia and/or other projects as appropriate and as resources allow.
- In addition the recent reorganization of the NMSP into four distinct regions was designed to encourage a greater program emphasis on developing new approaches to regional marine ecosystem governance and the development of partnerships with other organizations involved in marine ecosystem management.

NAPA Recommendation: Reach out to other agencies to implement and measure the effectiveness of new approaches to ocean governance.

NMSP Response:

- The NMSP is part of the Coastal Resource Management Program matrix of NOAA, which includes coastal management programs across NOAA, and which finds linkages and economies among similar programs.
- The NMSP has reached out to the National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Estuarine Research Reserves to foster, enhance, and expand site-based and regional collaboration resulting in a "seamless network" of National Parks, National Wildlife Refuges, National Marine Sanctuaries, and National Estuarine Research Reserves.
- The NMSP will continue to seek opportunities to partner with other Federal and state agencies.

NAPA Recommendation: The NMSP should:

- Use sites to experiment with civic approaches to governance;
- Group sites into categories; and
- Allow substantial discretion by individual sites.

NMSP Response:

- The NMSP remains committed to a 35-year history of public involvement in marine ecosystem management. The NMSP is equally committed to continuing to explore, refine, and enhance its civic approach to management. A civic approach to ocean governance is participatory, multipurpose, and locally based decision-making with clear national goals. To this end, the NMSP will consider convening a working group on this subject, initiating a research project with academia and/or other projects as appropriate and as resources allow.
- The individual national marine sanctuaries were each designated for their unique national significance, and each makes its own significant contribution to the system, thus resisting easy categorization. While the program may sometimes sort sanctuary by certain types (e.g., size classes) for certain tasks (e.g., forecasting outyear site needs), the NMSP does not support the idea of putting sanctuaries into generic categories.
- The NMSP management approach focuses on three main points: flexibility and innovation at the site (local) level, economies of scale and integration at the regional level, and broad programmatic guidance and support at the system (national) level. This structure allows the NMSP to provide maximum flexibility for the sites while working within a minimal but necessary system overlay. Innovation that promotes the "comparative advantage" of sites is encouraged throughout the NMSP; projects are being piloted at every level. The NMSP remains committed to this approach.

NAPA Recommendation: Commission an independent evaluation of NMSP operations.

NMSP Response:

- The NMSP is committed to undergo an independent evaluation in the future, as it has done in the past. The next review will likely occur in the next 3-5 years.

### **Next steps**

The NMSP is taking a series of innovative steps in addition to incorporating the ideas set forth in the NAPA report in ongoing management efforts. In particular, the NMSP will:

- Review and revise, as necessary, the existing program performance measures in January 2007.
- Develop one or more efficiency measure(s) as part of the larger suite of program performance measures.
- Consider convening a working group on civic approaches to marine resource management, initiating a research project with academia and/or other projects as appropriate and as resources allow.
- Revisit the existing national functional plans for science, education, and maritime heritage.
- Continue implementation of the NMSP's new regional structure.
- Complete and implement the action plan to improve MPR efficiency.